Harvard, Vanderbilt join effort to reshape LGBTQ+ physician training

AUG 30, 2022

Brendan Murphy
Senior News Writer

Efforts to support physicians who are trained and equipped to address the institutional barriers faced by LGBTQ+ patients continues to make headway with the expansion of the AMA Foundation National LGBTQ+ Fellowship Program.

Several of Harvard Medical School’s affiliated hospitals—in collaboration with Fenway Health in Boston— and Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) will take part in the fellowship program’s consortium of institutions. Harvard-Fenway and VUMC join the pilot fellowship at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, and the 2021 inaugural institution at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

The AMA Foundation “is uniquely positioned to serve as a convening force to improve LGBTQ+ health equity by facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing between key stakeholders and institutional leaders that will transform health care systems to be LGBTQ+ inclusive and affirming,” said William Sternfeld, MD, president of foundation’s board of directors. “The result will be a workforce of LGBTQ+ health specialists with a rich body of knowledge that can be shared with all medical schools and health care professionals.”

A groundbreaking program

Launched in 2020, the AMA Foundation National LGBTQ+ Fellowship Program aims to provide enhanced physician training, education and cultural sensitivity while bringing awareness of the health care and institutional barriers faced by LGBTQ+ patients and intersecting communities. The program’s mission is to ensure that all LGBTQ+ patients receive the highest standard of care while helping to transform the landscape of medical education.
The fellowship initiative is in response to persistent, pervasive inequities regarding access to and quality of health care experienced regularly by LGBTQ+ people. Studies show that 80% of medical students demonstrate a bias toward LGBTQ+ patients. One in five LGBTQ+ adults avoids health care services due to fear of discrimination.

Program expansion

In voting to approve grants to both Harvard-Fenway and VUMC, the AMA Foundation followed the recommendations of its Fellowship Commission on LGBTQ+ Health. Several key factors went into selecting Harvard-Fenway. Among them: an extensive network across affiliates that serve LGBTQ+ patients from adolescence through older adulthood.

Also, Harvard Medical School has established the Sexual and Gender Minority Health Equity Initiative to teach students foundational clinical skills in LGBTQIA+ health care while exploring the intersections of anti-LGBTQIA+ stigma with racism, ageism and ableism. The fellowship will extend and deepen this foundational work by implementing training systemwide for fellows, residents and faculty.

The AMA Foundation Fellowship Commission also recognized VUMC’s commitment to personalized medicine and to improving outcomes for LGBTQ+ patients at VUMC and across the U.S. VUMC’s Program for LGBTQ+ Health has a 10-year track record of investing in LGBTQ+ health and promoting national leadership in patient care, education, research and advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community. The clinical program at VUMC includes the Clinic for Transgender Health that brings together specifically trained experts to provide and coordinate comprehensive care for transgender and gender-nonconforming adults. The fellowship program will intercalate LGBTQ+ health education with all disciplines and throughout curricula at all levels of learners.

The AMA Advisory Committee on LGBTQ Issues highlights LGBTQ+ news and topics related to patients and physicians.

Copyright 1995 - 2021 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.